

# comes up trumps



**Knowledge factor:** Stephen and Sue Brain say knowing your cuts of meat is the key to thriving in beef export markets.

## More a spur than a threat

By SIMONE DALTON

STEPHEN Brain's bottom line is more about producing excellent pasture and quality cattle to harvest it rather than BSE outbreaks on the other side of the world.

So, he sees the gradual return of US beef to the Japanese and Korea markets as more an incentive to get better than a threat.

"As a producer, we have to have a long-term view," he said.

"I set out with a vision to grow an animal that is productive and what the market wants at a profitable price.

Mr Brain and his wife, Sue, run 1100 August-calving cows on dry land and irrigated pasture at their Boona property, near Mumbannar, on the Victorian-South Australian border.

They are members of Team TeMania, following the stud's breeding emphasis on the B3 index, which focuses on improving intra-muscular marbling.

The Brain calves are weaned at 140-150kg and the steers are sold to feedlots at 500kg to be fed for 300 days for the quality marbling market.

They rated No. 1 for compliance with Certified Australian Angus in 2007 and usually rate in the top 5 per cent for Rangers Feedlot.

Mr Brain believes drought has hit the Australian market just as hard as BSE damaged the US.

"The herd has got to be down significantly in numbers but the drought has helped prices hold," he said.

"Good rain up north has put a floor in the market now with overseas markets staggering."

Boona has been a Team Te Mania member for a year. It involves leasing bulls or entrusting genetic management to the people who breed the bulls.

"The great thing is that those genetics are through the whole herd now and the



**Long term:** Stephen Brain sees quality as the key to beef exports.

consistency is coming through," Mr Brain said.

Te Mania's Hamish McFarlane said the stud had not altered its breeding in response to BSE bans and the reintroduction of US product only reinforced its goal of constant improvement.

"All it will do is lift the bar for us a bit," Mr McFarlane said.

"You have options if you aim high enough and one of those markets becomes difficult to supply," he said.



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